

HIGH FIRS PRIMARY SCHOOL

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY POLICY

ISSUE 6 – April 2017

“Children who do not regularly attend school rarely achieve their full potential. Not only do they miss lessons, but patchy attendance makes it more and more difficult to catch up”.

Audit commission.gov.uk: Improving School Attendance

AIMS

The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure the regular and punctual attendance of all pupils at High Firs Primary School.
- Clarify the staged procedures for staff, Governors and Parents.
- Ensure the accurate recording of attendance and absence by Teachers.
- Set targets for improvement.

School Procedures for Managing Attendance

Poor attendance can disadvantage children. To this end, high regard is placed on regular and punctual attendance at High Firs Primary School. Children are expected to attend school for the full 190 days of the academic year unless there is a good reason for absence. This will mean a possible total of 380 sessions, as one session is half a school day. A day's absence will count as 2 sessions. Registers are kept for all classes in the school. Pupils are marked present or absent at the beginning of each a.m. and p.m. session.

Where an absence is planned, parents are requested to let the school office know in writing in advance, so that a pupil pass can be issued if the absence is authorised. This should be accompanied with supporting evidence (for example, a doctor's appointment card or letter for medical appointments).

Where a leave of absence has not been requested in advance, parents must telephone or send a message to the school when their children are absent to explain the reason. This must be done before 9.30 a.m on the first day of their absence. After this time, a delegated member of staff will telephone those Parents who we have not received a call or message from. Reasons for absence will be recorded in the school's first day calling file. If it is not possible to contact the Parent/Carer or other listed contacts, then this will be recorded too. If a child does not return to school and we do not hear from a Parent within a reasonable time, an outside agency such as Social Services or the School Liaison Officer may be contacted.

When a child returns to school, it is requested that the reason for absence is received in writing within 2 days, otherwise the absence may be regarded as unauthorised. If a pupil's attendance gives cause for concern, the school will write to the Parent/Carer to make them aware of this. Parents may also be advised in writing that the school will no longer authorise absences without medical evidence. If there is no improvement in attendance following these letters we may refer the child to the School Liaison Officer to discuss the number of absences and the reasons for these.

Registers are checked daily by the office staff and audited by the School Liaison Officer. Where there is cause for concern further appropriate action is taken. This may include:

- Contact is made with parents and carers
 - Daily monitoring of a child's attendance may be set up
 - The Attendance and Behaviour Service are informed
 - In the case of children on the Child Protection Register, Social Services are informed
 - Contact is made with the School Nurse.
- The school wishes to support parents and carers who are finding it difficult to ensure regular and punctual attendance.

If no evidence of improvement is seen after intervention, then formal procedures will follow. These may include:

- Further referral to Inclusion and Attendance services and a visit or telephone call from the School Liaison Officer;
- A multi-agency meeting can be called to agree how to best support Parents and children in this matter.
- A request to attend a Governor Panel dealing with Attendance and Punctuality matters to explain in a formal interview the reasons for non-attendance of a child/children;

If no improvement is forthcoming then the matter can result in legal proceedings, with Penalty Notices being issued by the LA.

Encouraging Good Attendance

At High Firs we encourage good attendance by:

- Awarding 'Register Rabbit' to the class with the highest attendance for the previous week.
- Awarding attendance certificates to children with 100%, 99% and 98% attendance at the end of each two terms.
- Awarding the class with the best attendance record for the previous two terms a 'special attendance prize day'

Absence

There are two types of absence:

- **Authorised** - where the school approves the pupil absence. This may include:
 - Genuine sickness
 - Unavoidable medical appointments (which are not possible to take outside school hours)
 - Days of religious observance
 - Short-term compassionate circumstances involving first degree relatives
 - Exceptional circumstances agreed by the Headteacher
- **Unauthorised** - where the school will not approve absence. This may include:
 - Unjustified late arrival
 - Birthdays or other celebrations
 - Visits or family holidays
 - Commitments of other family members

Should a child's attendance be a cause for concern, absences which would normally be considered as "Authorised" may be registered as "Unauthorised" due to their attendance being below the expected norm. Parents would be notified if it was likely that this would be the case for their child.

If the school is not satisfied with the reasons given for absence, or a written reason is not given, an **unauthorised** absence may be recorded. The school can require that medical evidence is produced e.g. a medical certificate in cases of illness. The school will inform the parents/carers if absence has not been authorised.

Periods of unauthorised absence (including term-time holidays) and use of Penalty Notices

All Kent schools are able to action Penalty Notices to be served on parents where a child has **10 sessions (5 days) or more** of unauthorised absence (for whatever reason) during any **100 sessions (50 days)**. The unauthorised term time leave does not have to be consecutive for a parent to receive a penalty notice. Penalty notices will be actioned for periods of unauthorised absence, following the clear guidelines set out by Kent County Council. Should the penalty notice remain unpaid or have been paid only in part at the end of the 28 day period Kent County Council can instigate legal proceedings against the parents. Any money secured via the serving of penalty notices does NOT go to the school; this is retained by Kent County Council.

All requests for leave of absence will be considered individually by the Headteacher but will only be authorised in very exceptional circumstances. If a leave of absence is taken without the school's permission, or the child fails to return on the agreed date, then the absence will be recorded as unauthorised and a penalty notice can be issued.

Lateness

School begins at 8.55 a.m. and all pupils are expected to be in school for registration at this time. **Any child arriving in school after these times is deemed as being late, as this is when the registers close. Lateness after 9.10 a.m. is classed as unauthorised absence** unless this absence has already been authorised.

If a child is late arriving in school for any reason, parents must go to the Office to sign the 'late book' and enter a reason for the lateness.

Pupils who are consistently late are disrupting not only their own education but also that of others. Where persistent lateness gives cause for concern, further action may be taken.

Pupils who have not been collected at the agreed end of the school day must be signed out at the Office. This will be tracked as per other absences.

Absence out of registration periods

Sometimes a pupil may be out of school for a period during the day but be present during both registrations. (For example, they may register in the morning, leave to attend a doctor's appointment and then return to school in time for afternoon registration). These absences will also be tracked; although they will not be shown on the pupil's registration certificate, any concerns regarding the number or nature of these absences will also be followed up as per absences at registration periods.

Roles and Responsibilities

Class Teachers have initial responsibility for:

- Encourage and expect good attendance and punctuality from the children in their class.
- Conveying the importance of regular and punctual attendance to parents; where necessary highlighting any possible correlation between the child's attendance and their attainment / progress.
- Recording attendance and absence appropriately and accurately in the register.

The Headteacher has responsibility for:

- Ensuring the implementation of this Policy.
- Reporting attendance and absence matters/concerns to the Governing Body
- Setting targets for the improvement of attendance
- Overseeing the following delegated administrative tasks:
 - Close monitoring of pupils causing concern, including weekly attendance monitoring meetings with office Administrator.
 - Contacting parents about their child's attendance
 - Informing parents of their child's attendance % every 2 terms (alongside other information on academic and social developments).
 - Liaison with the Attendance and Behaviour Service.and following these up personally where deemed necessary.

The Governors have the responsibility for:

- Ensuring the implementation of this Policy.
- Monitoring attendance/lateness patterns-
- At the request of the Headteacher - meeting with parents to discuss attendance concerns where appropriate.

Parents have responsibility for:

- Informing the school of reason for absence by 9.30 a.m on the first day of absence.
- Ensuring their children arrive at school between 8.45 a.m. and 8.55 a.m.
- Signing their child into school when arriving after 8.55 a.m.
- Ensuring that they do not allow a child to have time off school unless it is really necessary.
- Making appointments outside school time wherever possible; if the appointment does fall in school time parents must let the school office know in writing in advance, so that a pupil pass can be issued if the absence is authorised. Absence will not be authorised for siblings who are taken out of school in order that another child may attend an appointment.

Completing the Register

- Registers provide the daily record of attendance of all pupils; accurate records are especially important, if the school has to be evacuated in an emergency.
- They are documents which may be required in a court of law e.g. as evidence in prosecutions for non-attendance.
- They contribute to end of term and end of year reports and any certificates of achievement.

As a legal document, registers must be kept on the premises at all times.

- Registers are completed in black and red ink – a red circle for absence and a black line for attendance. They are completed twice a day and returned to the office.
- **The appropriate attendance/absence codes will be entered in the absence circle by the Office Manager.**

Notes from parents concerning absence from school should be initialed by the member of class staff if seen and then forwarded to the Office, for filing in the pupil's file.

Shared with Staff & Governors: January 2017

Review Date: January 2020

